

Ochoco and Deschutes National Forests Office of Communications

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Contacts: Roland Giller, Office of Communications, 541/383-5653

Rick Bond, Fremont-Winema N.F., 541/365-7052

Rain Hastens Matsutake Mushroom Season Opening

CRESCENT, Ore.—Recent precipitation has prompted Deschutes and Fremont-Winema National Forest managers to hasten the start of the Matsutake mushroom season.

"We're trying to be more responsive to the wishes of harvesters by changing opening day now that the fire danger has been reduced," said Neil Bosworth, natural resource team leader on the Crescent Ranger District of the Deschutes National Forest.

Bosworth said district rangers authorized the opening date to be changed from September 15 to September 12, after rain allowed fire managers to ease fire restrictions. Forest Service officials still plan to close the 2003 season on November 14.

Front desk personnel at the Crescent Ranger District of the Deschutes National Forest and the Chemult Ranger District of the Fremont-Winema National Forest will begin selling Matsutake commercial permits on Friday, September 12. The Crescent Ranger District will also sell permits on Saturday from 7:45 a.m. until noon, while the Chemult Ranger District sells them from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. that day.

The annual fall mushroom harvest draws hundreds of pickers to Central Oregon for the two-month season, which normally begins September 3. However, last month managers decided to delay the season, after fire officials expressed concern more human-caused fires might be started during the fall harvest.

This summer's Davis, Link and 18 Fires on the Deschutes National Forest were human-caused. The fires burned 28,564 acres and cost \$13.4 million to suppress. Fire investigators have not determined the cause of the 90,376-acre B and B Complex Fires.

Public use fire restrictions for the Deschutes, Ochoco and Fremont-Winema National Forests, and Prineville District of the Bureau of Land Management have been eased to reflect the present fire danger.

Fire managers also lowered the Central Oregon Industrial Fire Precaution Level to level two, which allows power saws, blasting and welding operations to be conducted on the three federal units between 8 p.m. and 1 p.m. The Fremont-Winema National Forest Industrial Fire Precaution Level is at level one, which only requires a fire watch after industrial operations are completed.

"The fire danger has only eased," said Karen Curtiss, assistant fire staff officer for Central Oregon Fire Management Services. "People still need to check current fire restrictions before visiting their favorite public lands areas."

Call 1-800-523-4737 for current Central Oregon fire restrictions. For additional information about the fall Matsutake harvest on the Deschutes National Forest, call the Crescent Ranger District at 541/433-3200.

Telephone the Chemult Ranger District for information about the Fremont-Winema National Forest fall mushroom program at 541/365-7001. Call the Klamath Falls Interagency Fire Center at 541/883-6831 for current Fremont-Winema restrictions.

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